





THE
BISHOP OF CHURCH CHARGE
IN THE
VISITATION.

THE
BISHOP
OF
Chester's Charge
IN HIS
Primary Visitation
AT
CHESTER.

May 5. 1691.

Nicholas Stratford. 1633-1707



L O N D O N,
Printed for Thomas Bennet at the Half Moon in
St. Pauls Church Yard, 1692.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013



T H E

Bishop of Chester's Charge, &c.

My Dear Brethren ;

SINCE nothing can more conduce to the Edification of the Church in Faith and Holiness, than that its Pastors be duly qualified for their Work : I think my time cannot be better employed in this my Primary Visitation, than in putting you in remembrance, what manner of Men the Pastors of the Church ought to be ; and in quickening you and my self, to the faithful Discharge of those great Duties which are incumbent upon us.

In Order to both which Purposes, you need do no more than seriously reflect upon those things, which before your admission to this Sacred Office, you solemnly before God and his Church, profess'd to believe, and promis'd to perform.

The first Question proposed to you, as preparatory to your Ordination to Priesthood, was, *Do you think in your heart that you be truly called, according to the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Order of this Church of England, to the Order and Ministry of Priesthood ?* To which you Answered, *I think it :* That is, I think it in my heart, I am verily perswaded, that I am so truly called, according to the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Order of this Church of *England*.

These latter Words [*The Order of the Church of England*] are not put to denote another Rule, different from the *Will of Christ* ; but are rather added, by way of Explanation, to shew, Who those are that are called according to his Will, viz. Those who are so qualified as the Church of *England* requires.

B

The

The Call here meant, is the inward Call from God; which must go before to prepare a Person, for the outward Call from the Church, in setting him apart to this Office, by *Prayer* and *Imposition of hands*.

This inward Call consists in the due qualification of the Person, for this weighty Work (for God never calls a Man to any Employment, which he does not before in some good measure fit him for): These Qualifications may be reduced to Three General Heads: That the *Life*, That the *Learning*, That the *Design* of the Person be such, as are agreeable to the Sacredness of the Office. All which are contain'd, in the Caution the Bishop gives to the Person who presents to him the Persons to be Ordain'd. *Take heed, that the Persons whom you present to us, be apt and meet for their Learning and godly Conversation, to exercise their Ministry duly, to the Honour of God, and the edifying of his Church.*

First, That he be for *Life*, *blameless*, *sober*, *just*, *holy*, *temperate*, as St. Paul prescribes in his Epistle to *Titus*: That is, that he be not addicted to any of those Vices, which would be a Disparagement to his Ministry, and hinder the good effect of it; and that he be indued with all those Vertues, which may adorn it. Whosoever therefore lives in the Practice of any such Vice, as will lessen his Authority, and expose his Ministry to Contempt, he is not qualified, according to the Order of the Church of *England*.

Secondly, That he be for *Learning*, so well acquainted with the Sense of the Holy Scriptures, as to be able to instruct his Flock, in all that is necessary for them both to know and to do, in order to their Eternal Salvation; and to press their Duty upon them by such Considerations, as may be apt to work upon their Wills, and induce them to the Practice of it. Thus St. Paul advises *Timothy*, to make choice of such for Pastors, who shall be *able to teach others*; and commands *Titus* to see, that those

he

he ordained were such, as were able by sound Doctrine, to exhort and convince Gainfayers. Whoſoever therefore is ſo ignorant, that he is not able to inſtruct his People in every neceſſary Point, both of Faith and Practice; and to enforce their Duty by fit Perſwaſives, he is not called according to the Will of Chriſt. No man doubtleſs can imagine, That it is the Will of Chriſt that the Blind ſhould lead the Blind; that they ſhould be ſet to be Guides to others, who know not the way themſelves. The

Tit. I. 9.

Third, Neceſſary Qualification, is a due Intention; That a Man be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghoſt, to take upon him this Office and Miniſtry, to ſerve God for the promoting of his Glory, and the edifying of his People; as it is expreſs'd in the Office for the ordering of Deacons. Not but that a Mans intention may be approved by God, that hath in it a mixture of reſpect to Secular Advantage; but then it muſt be ſo much Inferiour, in ſuch perfect Subordination to the other, as his principal end, that he deſpiſe all Worldly Regards in compariſon with it; and reſolve to perſevere in his Work, though he meet with all the diſcouragements in the world to oppoſe him.

Though, bleſſed be God, there are many of you, *my Brethren*, not only whoſe Life and Learning are ſuch, as your Adverſaries can make no juſt Exception againſt; but who alſo give ſufficient Proof, that your intention was right, by your unwearied diligence, in the whole and every part of your Work; yet I fear there may be ſome, who if tryed by this Rule, will be forced to confeſs, that they are not ſo qualified, as the Laws of Chriſt, and of this Church require. Can it be thought, that they have the Glory of God principally in their eyes, who endeavour to get into this Holy Employment, by ſuch unworthy Means as God abhors, by falſe Titles, and forged Certificates? Can they be thought to aim chiefly at the Salvation of Souls, who leave the Work wholly to others, and take the Wages only to themſelves? Who

for their ease and pleasure absent themselves from their Charges, and think that Curate the best qualified, who may be hired at the cheapest rate?

And here, my Brethren, I shall charge your Consciences with Two Things relating to this Matter.

First, That you never send a Person to be Ordained, with a Lye in his hand; that is, that you never signify to the Bishop, that you will take a Person for your Curate (in case he shall think fit to Ordain him) whom you intend never to employ in that Service: For though a Title is indeed no Qualification for the Office, but a cautionary Provision, only for the Maintainance of the Person; yet to bring a false Title, is a plain Argument, that the Man is destitute of that Truth and Honesty, which are necessarily requisite to so Sacred an Office as this is.

Secondly, That you never give a Testimonial of the good Life and Conversation of any Person, whose Life and Conversation you do not certainly know to be such. Considering, that if the Bishop gives Orders to any unworthy Man, upon the Credit he gives to your Certificate, you must answer to God, for all the Scandal that is brought upon the Church thereby, and for the Ruine of all those Souls, which are misled by his bad Example.

In the next place, these Two Questions were proposed to you, before your Admission to the Office of Priesthood.

I. *Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal Salvation, through Faith in Christ Jesus?*

II. *Are you determined out of the said Scriptures, to instruct the People committed to your Charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal Salvation) but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures?*

To the First you Answered, *I am so persuaded:* To the

the Second, *I have so determin'd by Gods Grace.*

That the Holy Scriptures contain *sufficiently*, all Doctrine required of necessity to eternal Salvation: That is, That they not only contain all such necessary Doctrine, but in some place or other, so *clearly* contain it, as that it may be understood by all those, for whose Salvation the Scriptures were designed, I take it for granted you all firmly believe; It being the main Foundation of the Religion of Protestants, in opposition to the Church of *Rome*, which by asserting the deficiency of the Holy Scriptures, in both these respects, hath thereby open'd a door to those many Innovations She hath introduc'd into the Christian Doctrine and Worship, and may (if opportunity shall serve) introduce as many more: I shall not therefore insist upon this. That, which it may be more needful to speak to, is;

Secondly, What by God's Grace you determined to do, viz. *To instruct the People committed to your Charge, out of the said Scriptures; and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal Salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded,* may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures.

One of the prime Qualifications St. Paul requires in a Pastor, is, That he be *διδασκτικός*, not only *able*, but *apt* 2 Tim. 2. 24. *and ready to teach*; and elsewhere he describes him, as one, that *labours in the Word and Doctrine*; and that 1 Tim. 5. 17. *This Labour in the Word and Doctrine*, was Necessary, not only in the Apostles days, when the Christian Religion was to be planted in the World; but is still so, is manifest, from the ends, for which he tells us, *Christ* appointed Pastors and Teachers; which were not only the converting of Infidels, the gathering of the Sheep that were scatter'd abroad into the Fold; but *the perfecting of* Ephes. 4. 12. *the Saints, and the edifying of the Body of Christ.*

'Tis indeed strange, That any Man should think this Work unnecessary, as long as there are Sinners to be converted from the Error of their ways, and Saints to be edified

edified in their Holy Faith; as long as Souls are in so great danger of being eternally lost, through the daily Assaults of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

And it would be yet more strange, if any Men who own themselves *Ministers of the Church of England*, should think they can be excused from it; when in the Exhortation before their receiving of Priests Orders, they were told, *That to teach, and to premonish, to seek and provide for the Lords Family, was that they were called unto.* When upon the Bishop's demanding, Whether they were determin'd to instruct the People committed to their Charge out of the Scriptures? They Answered, *They had so determin'd by God's Grace.* When in the very Words of Ordination, it was laid upon them, as a Charge, *To be faithful Dispensers of the Word of God.*

Now this Teaching is either *publick* or *private*. Of the private I shall speak, when I come to the next Question save one: That which is *publick*, is to be perform'd these Two ways especially; by *Preaching* and by *Catechising*. And,

First as to Preaching, Consider that solemn and dreadful Charge St. Paul lays upon Timothy, *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom, Preach the Word.* Consider also, That our Church hath enjoyned every allow'd Preacher that is beneficed, *to have a Sermon every Lord's Day in the Year.* And as a farther Enforcement, That His Majesty hath charged all the Bishops, *To see that the Clergy in their respective Diocesses, be duly resident upon their Livings, preaching the Word of God plainly.*

Letter to
the Bishop of
London.

How assiduous many of the Ancients were in this part of their Office, and how necessary they thought it so to be, I need not tell you; but methinks a serious reflection upon it, should make those not only *blush* but *tremble*, who live in the Neglect of it, who are so far from observing

serving the Laws of our Church, while they boast of more than ordinary Conformity to it, that they have not perhaps more than one Sermon in a Year, for two Benefices.

Now, that we may in this way of Teaching, be successful to the Salvation of our Hearers, we are here directed both as to the *Matter* and the *Manner* of it.

First, As to the *Matter* of our Preaching, it must be out of the Holy Scriptures: But since of the things contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, some are *necessary*, some are *profitable* only; and since of these things which are only *profitable*, some are more, others are less profitable; our Pulpit-Discourses should be chiefly confined to those Truths, which are *necessary* or *highly profitable*, in order to eternal Salvation; omitting all School-Niceties, and subtle Disputes, which are of no Practical Use; and never let any Truth, which is call'd in question by none of your Hearers, be made a Matter of Controversie in the Pulpit.

Endeavour effectually to convince your Hearers, how by our Apostasie from God, we have made our selves obnoxious to His heavy Displeasure; and that there is a necessity of a Mediator between *God* and Man. Shew them who this Mediator is, and how he is qualified for this great Work; what the Terms are, upon which God hath graciously promised to pardon our Sins, and how ready he is, upon these Terms, of Faith, Repentance, and sincere future Obedience, to receive us into his Favour: Press those Graces and Duties most, which are most comprehensive, as Justice and Charity. Teach them *to render to all their dues, as tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, &c.* Represent *CHARITY* to them, in all those branches of it, in which it is described by *St. Paul* in *1 Cor. 13*. Set your selves especially against those sins, which are most visible in your Auditors; as *St. Paul*, who reason'd

Acts 24. 25. reason'd of Righteousness and Chastity, when he preach-
 ed before an unjust and adulterous *Felix*. More particu-
 larly, in pursuance of His Majesties Letter, preach fre-
 quently against profane Swearing, Perjury, Drunkenness,
 and Profanation of the Lords Day; and when such a
 Sermon is to be preached, read to your People such Sta-
 tute-Law or Laws, as are provided against that Sin, which
 is the Subject of the Day : Which Statutes, together
 with his Majesties Letter, I have formerly sent you. And
 let not only the more gross Sins of the Flesh, but the
 more subtle Sins of the Spirit, (such as Pride, Envy, Ma-
 lice, &c.) be expos'd to your People in their odious na-
 ture, and aggravating Circumstances. Acquaint them not
 only with those Duties, to which they are all in common
 obliged, as they are men and Christians; but with those
 special Duties, which are incumbent upon them in their
 different Ages, States and Relations. In short, let that be
 the drift of your preaching, which is the design of the
 whole Gospel of Christ, *To teach men to deny all Ungod-*
 Tit. 2. 11, 12. *liness and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously and*
Godly in this present World.

Secondly, As to the *Manner* of Preaching, passing over
 other particulars, I shall mention Three only at present,
 Two of which are here sufficiently implied: Preach the
 Word *sincerely, plainly* and *affectionately*.

1. *Sincerely*; Which is implied in these Words, *That*
you will teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal Sal-
vation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be proved
by the Scriptures. For Sincerity consists, as in teaching
 all that the Scripture makes necessary; so in teaching no-
 thing for necessary, that is foreign to the Scripture; as
 the Church of Rome does in her new Creed, imposing ma-
 ny Doctrines as necessary to Salvation, which are not on-
 ly Strangers to the Scriptures, but plainly contrary to the
 Doctrines, which are there taught.

2. Plainly,

2. Plainly, and to the capacity of your Hearers ; which is implied in the Word *instruct* : For how can a man be instructed by a Discourse, which he knows not the meaning of ? He defeats the design of his Preaching, and betrays his Hypocrisie, who renders that obscure, which he pretends to reveal. To which I add ;

3. Preach *Affectionately*, with that warmth and earnestness of Spirit, which becomes matters of the greatest moment : It would grieve a Man to hear matters of the greatest moment, so coldly and drowsily delivered, as if the Preacher did not himself believe what he said, and were afraid lest his Hearers should be brought to believe it. O my Brethren, let us but seriously consider the inestimable worth of souls, the unvaluable price that was paid for them, what danger they are in of being eternally lost, how dreadful our accounts will shortly be, if they be lost through our slowness and laziness : Let us but consider what Heaven and Hell mean, what it is to be everlastingly saved or damned, and we shall then think our greatest zeal and fervency, will be little enough, for such a Work as this.

I shall say no more concerning Preaching, but proceed to the next way of publick teaching, which is ;

Secondly, By Catechising, or instructing persons in the Principles of Religion : Which is indeed but a more familiar way of Preaching. This is a Duty laid upon you by the Canon and Statute-Law both. The *Fifty Ninth* Canon under a severe Penalty, requires *every Rector, Vicar and Curate, upon every Lord's Day in the Afternoon, to examine, and instruct the Youth, and the more ignorant People of his Parish in the Catechism*. The same is made your Duty by Act of Parliament, in the first Rubrick after the Catechism ; and because some (who are apt enough to censure their Brethren for breaking other Laws) can too easily dispense with themselves in this, His Majesty hath charged the Bishops to see, *That all the Clergy*

Let. to the
Bish. of Lond.

in their respective Diocesses do Catechise the Youth. To which, if we add the Practice of the Apostles, (the great Master-Builders of the Church) who first taught Men the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ: And lastly, the voluntary Engagement you lye under to it, methinks nothing can be thought wanting to oblige you effectually to this Duty.

But now should we set aside all these Considerations, and consider only, how advantageous this Work is to the Welfare of the Souls committed to our care; the great Benefits they would reap by it, the great Mischiefs they fall into by the Neglect of it, one would think we should need no other Motive to put us upon the diligent practice of it.

What is the Reason that our Sermons are generally of so little effect? That our People hear us year after year, and many of them are never the wiser, *are ever learning, and never come to the Knowledge of the Truth?* One main Reason doubtless, is, because they were never prepared to understand our Sermons, and to profit by them, by being first more familiarly instructed in the Principles of Religion. What's the Reason, That many are so easily seduced to Error and Vice, but because they were never well rooted and grounded in the Faith? *Train up a Child in the way that he should go, and he will not depart from it when he is old.*

Prov. 22. 6.

As therefore, my Brethren, you tender the Salvation of your People, set your selves without delay, to this so advantageous and necessary a Work: And that you may do it the more effectually, I give it you in Charge, to preach constantly in the Afternoon, upon some part of the Church Catechism; and to Examine some of the Young People of your Parish quite thorow it, as oft as you preach upon it. And that Parents and Masters may take the greater care to send their Children and Servants, to be instructed by you, do not only frequently and earnestly

nestly exhort them to it, but thorowly acquaint them with the great Benefits that will accrue, not only to their Children and Servants, but likewise to themselves thereby; as their Children will by this means be render'd more dutiful and obedient, and their Servants more faithful and diligent.

Having solemnly declared, That *You are perswaded, that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity to eternal Salvation*; and that you were determin'd out of the said Scriptures, to instruct the People committed to your Charge: In the next place you promised, *To give your faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same, according to the commandment of God*; that is, as God hath prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Of *Ministring the Doctrine of Christ*, I have already spoken, in what I have said about Preaching and Catechising.

As to the Sacrament of Baptism, I shall at present only put you in mind of some few things, which are either expressly or implicitly required by the Rubricks.

First, Let your People know, That Baptism being the solemn Admission of a Person into the publick Society of Christians, it is very unbecoming its Nature and Design, to have it administer'd in private. Admonish them therefore to bring their Children to be baptiz'd in the publick Congregation, lest by their refusing so to do, Christ should reckon them in the number of those, who are ashamed of him and his Religion before men.

Rubrick before private Baptism.

Secondly, Admonish your People, That it is most convenient, that Baptism should not be administer'd, but upon Sundays and Holy-days, when the greatest number of People come together; because in the Baptism of Infants,

Rubr. before publick Baptism.

every Man present, may be put in remembrance of his own Profession, made to God in his Baptism. Exhort them therefore diligently to attend throughout the whole Administration, to reflect upon their past lives, and to consider how far they have kept, and wherein they have broken their Baptismal Vow.

Rubr before
private Bap-
tism.

Thirdly, Admonish your People, not to defer the Baptism of their Children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their Birth, lest by unnecessary delay the Child die, before it be dedicated to the Service of the Lord Jesus.

Can. 61.

Rubr after
the Catechism

Fourthly, I add, (as being nearly allied to Baptism) That you take due care to prepare the young People of your Parishes for Confirmation: *So soon as Children are come to a competent Age, and can say in their Mother Tongue, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can answer to the other Questions in the short Catechism, they are to be brought to the Bishop to be confirm'd*: But they are not to be thought to be of a competent age, (tho' they can repeat the Words) till they be capable of knowing the meaning of them, and their own great Concernment therein. For what profit can they receive by Confirmation, unless they understand what the design of it is, and the Obligation they take upon themselves thereby? And this, my Brethren, is to be your care. You are required either to bring or send in writing, with your hand subscribed thereunto, the Names of all such Persons within your Parishes, as you shall think fit to be presented to the Bishop to be confirmed: And how can you think them fit, before you have examined them, and find that they have a competent knowledge of these things, and are willing to consent to the Vow that was made in their Names, and to take it upon themselves?

Rubr. after
the Catechism

As to the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, (the too general

neral neglect of which, is just matter of lamentation) make your People know that they are not left at liberty, whether they will receive it or not; but that it is a necessary Duty laid upon them, by the express command of Christ: That if they sincerely love Christ, or have any Value for Christ's Love to them, they will need no other motive to induce them to it; That it is their Duty to receive it, not only sometime or other before they die, (perhaps at their last breath) but frequently while they live, if they have opportunity: That the first Christians made it a constant part of their publick Worship. And I beseech you to administer it in your Churches, as often as you can get a convenient number together to receive it; to be sure, so often that every person may have opportunity of receiving it at least three times in the Year.

As to *Discipline*, observe more especially the Rubrick before the Communion, in keeping back those Offenders from the Lords Table, whom you are there required not to admit, (viz. *Notorious evil Livers, or such as have done any wrong to their Neighbours, by which the Congregation is offended*) and in giving an Account of them to the Ordinary.

And here, my Brethren, I desire you seriously to consider, That in this, and in your Answer to the next Question, You promised *faithful diligence*, in doing the Duties of your Office; so many and so weighty indeed are they, that the utmost diligence imaginable, is little enough for the due performance of them; our Comfort is, all that God requires is *faithful diligence*. If we do not chuse to neglect any Duty, or to do it carelessly; but sincerely endeavour to perform them all as we ought, in what we fall short, God will be merciful to us, and graciously accept the Will for the Deed. And this is the least that God will accept; be not therefore slothful in this great business, but apply your selves constantly to your Work, and *whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

might. I might tell you, that the nature and design of our Work requires this; That the Names by which we are in Scripture signified, (as Stewards, Ministers, Shepherds, Watchmen, Labourers,) do all import diligence and industry; that the Work is of all others, the most excellent, worthy of all the pains we can lay out upon it; I might set before you the example of our blessed Saviour, and his Apostles, of all those faithful Pastors who have gone before us: But I shall only add for your encouragement, That your Recompence from God, will be proportionable to your labour; by how much the more abundant you are in this work of the Lord, by so much the more abundant will your Reward in Heaven be.

But to proceed.

In the next place you promised these Two Things in the general.

I. *That you would be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange Doctrines contrary to God's Word.*

II. *To use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations, as well to the Sick as to the Whole within your Cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given.*

First, That You would be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange Doctrines contrary to God's Word. Concerning which Observe;

1. That the *Erroneous Doctrines* here meant, are those only, which your People (some of them at least) are already infected with; for no Errors can be banished from them, but those which they have given entertainment to.

As

As for other Errors, which they know nothing of, never so much as mention them, lest by acquainting your People therewith, you may endanger their being insinared by them. Observe,

2. That though all Erroneous Doctrines, are with *faithful diligence*, yet not all with *equal diligence* to be opposed; but as the Errors are more or less mischievous, so our Zeal against them ought in proportion to be more or less. Some Errors there are which do not touch any part of the Foundation, which have no visible tendency to an evil Life, or to the disturbance of the Peace of the Church: Others there are which oppose some Articles of our Creed, as that Christ is not the Eternal Son of God, begotten of the Father before all Worlds, &c. and which are inconsistent with Peace and Holiness. The former sort do not deserve to be opposed with so much Zeal as the later, against which we can never too earnestly contend: Of which for instance, are these; That no Man is bound to repent of his Sins till he come to die; That Christ's Righteousness is so made ours, that we need do nothing our selves in order to the obtaining of Eternal Salvation, &c.

Secondly, The next thing you promised, was, *To use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations, as well to the Sick as to the Whole within your Cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given.*

First, *To the whole*; To use not only *publick* but *private Monitions and Exhortations, as need shall require.* And truly, my Brethren, there is commonly but too great need of this: For the Reproofs and Exhortations we use in publick, being not directed to this or that Person in particular, but to all in common, who are guilty of the Sin reprov'd, or of the Neglect of the Duty exhorted to: They who are concerned, do commonly find some way to shift them off from themselves; but when you address to each Sinner in particular, and plainly tell him,
that

that *he is the Man*, who lives in the practice of this or that known Sin, &c. he can then find no way to make his Escape.

And here, my Brethren, I beseech you, not to be strangers to your People; but as you have leisure and opportunity, to go to their Houses, and acquaint your selves familiarly with them, that you may the better know, what their particular Tempers and Inclinations are, what are the Prejudices they lie under, what the Temptations they are most obnoxious to, and may accordingly apply your selves to them. By one hours familiar Discourse with them in private, you may work more good upon them, than by many Sermons in publick. Publick Preaching has, I grant, this great Advantage, that therein you speak to many, and by consequence may do good to many at once; but an Application to a Sinner in private, is usually much more effectual, as to him in particular.

To satisfy you, that this is your Duty, I need not tell you, that St. Paul taught not only publickly, but *from house to house*: That Night and Day he ceased not (as he had opportunity) to warn *every Man*; not all collectively, but every one apart, as the Words in the original import; That he exhorted and comforted, and charged *every one*. It will be enough to tell you, That to *rebuke a sinning Brother*, and to *exhort one another*, are the bounden Duties even of private Christians, and therefore much more of those, who by their Office are to watch over Souls, and to give an Account to God for them: But suppose this were not made your Duty antecedently by God, yet you have made it so Your selves, by your voluntary Promise to perform it.

But that this weighty Work of private Instruction, Exhortation, Admonition and Reproof, may be the more successfully managed, take the most convenient seasons for it, when the Persons are the most apt to be wrought upon; and do it with that meekness and demonstration of love, that

Act. 20. 20, 31.

ἐν παντὶ ἑκάστου

1 Thes. 2. 11.

that it may plainly appear to your People, that you do it out of meer Kindness and tender Compassion to their Souls.

Secondly, The next thing you Vowed, was, *Faithful diligence in your Monitions and Exhortations to sick Persons*. Which is a Work of the greatest moment, in order to the engaging them to a HOLY Life, if they recover; or the preparing them for a Happy Death, if they be taken away by their sickness; and therefore requires a proportionable care in the management of it. To see a soul entering upon the other World, likely within a few hours to be in an endless state of happiness or misery inexpressible, should, methinks, make us bestir our selves, to save it from Death, before it be too late.

Do not therefore stay till you be sent for, but go to them of your own accord. Deal faithfully, and withal prudently with them about the state of their souls. If you find them grossly ignorant, instruct them (as you have opportunity) in those Truths which are absolutely necessary to be known. If they be such as have lived in any notorious sin, or whom you have great Reason to fear are meer strangers to a Holy Life, labour to awaken them, by the most moving Considerations, to a sense of their sin and danger; but let them withal know, that their Case is not so desperate, but that there is still ground of hope concerning them: Shew them the greatness of that Salvation which Christ hath purchased for them, and upon what Terms it may be still obtained by them. And though in their sickness they cannot give Proof of the sincerity of their Repentance, by resisting and overcoming those Temptations which formerly prevailed over them; yet put them upon all that which in their present circumstances they are capable of doing; upon confessing their sins, and imploring the mercy of God thro' Christ; upon patient submission to God's good pleasure; upon forgiving those from the heart who have offended them;

and upon making Restitution (as far as they are able) for any Injuries they may have done to others; upon Resolutions and solemn Promises, by the assistance of God's Grace, of forsaking their former sins, and of leading a new Life, if God shall please to raise them up again. And if they recover, go to them again, and seriously mind them of the Vows they made upon their sick beds, and quicken them to the performance of them. Do not fail to let them know, that their condition will be much more deplorable, if they shall again relapse into their old sins.

In the next place, these Questions were propos'd to you, *will you be diligent in Prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the Knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the World and the Flesh?* To which you Answered: *I will endeavour my self so to do, the Lord being my Helper.* So that you promised by God's Help these Four Things:

- I. That you would be diligent in Prayers.
- II. That you would be diligent, in reading the Holy Scriptures.
- III. In such studies as would help to the Knowledge of the same. And therefore,
- IV. That you would lay aside the study of the World and the Flesh.

First, *That you would be diligent in Prayers.* That is, both in publick and private Prayers.

1. *In publick Prayers.* Which we ought more especially to attend to, since G O D is much more honoured by our publick Addresses to him, than he can be by those which are made to him in private; and because we our selves may expect a greater Blessing from those Prayers which are put up to God by many joyntly, than from those which are put up by our single selves. As there-

therefore anciently a Morning and Evening Sacrifice was every day publickly offer'd up to God in the Temple at *Jerusalem*; so I heartily recommend it to you, my Brethren, That in all your Parishes, where a Congregation (though but a small one) can be got together, you would every day have Morning and Evening Prayer in your Churches. And that you read the Prayers not *partially*, but *entirely*; and with such seriousness as becomes them, as may invite all piously-disposed People to them, and quicken their Devotion when they are at them. I know not how any Minister can dispense with himself in this matter, or what *Salvo* he can have for his Conscience, who does otherwise. But though publick Prayers be the more excellent; yet,

2. This cannot excuse you from being *diligent in private Prayers*; and that both for your People, and for your selves.

First, Pray much and earnestly for your People: Of this St. Paul hath set us an Example, as he himself testifies in his Epistles; thus he prayed for the *Colossians*, *That they might be filled with the Knowledge of the will of God, in all Wisdom and Spiritual Understanding, that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.* Thus he pray'd for the *Ephesians*, *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them, the spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened; that they might know what is the hope of his Calling, &c.* That God would grant them according to the riches of his Glory, to be strengthen'd with all might, by his spirit in the inner Man; that Christ might dwell in their hearts by Faith, &c. Thus he tells the *Romans*, *That without ceasing he made mention of them always in his Prayers.* In like manner he prayed for the *Philipians*; *Always (says he) and in every Prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy.* He thought it not enough to pray once or twice,

Colos. 1. 9,
10, 11.

Ephes. 1. 15,
16, 17, 18.

Ephes. 3. 16,
17, 18, 19.

Rom. 1. 9.

Phil. 1. 4.

but he ceased not still to pray for them. It cannot be thought, that any Pastor, who aims, as he ought, at the salvation of his People, can forbear to pray for them.

Secondly, Pray constantly and earnestly for your selves. For such assistances of God's holy spirit, as may enable you rightly to discharge the Duties of your holy Calling. *We* 2 Cor. 3. 5 *are not sufficient of our selves, to think any thing as of our selves, but all our sufficiency is of God.* We made our Ordination Vow in expectation of, and dependance upon Gods help. *I will do so by the help of the Lord; I will, the Lord being my helper.* And we need not doubt of God's help, if we sincerely and importunately pray for it; for Luk. 11. 13. *he hath promised his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; That is, all the Gifts of his Holy Spirit, we stand in need of.* But to proceed:

2. You promised, *To be diligent in reading the Holy Scriptures.* And,
3. *In such studies as help to the knowledge of the same.*
I put them both together for brevities sake.

1 Tim. 4. 13. St. Paul commanded *Timothy*, to give attendance to reading, viz. of the Holy Scriptures; and that not only in publick to others, but also in private; that he himself might be the more thoroughly instructed in them. And if this was needful for *Timothy*, who had learn'd the Holy Scriptures from a Child, it will I fear, be much more needful for many of us. The Scriptures were inspired by God to this very end, That the *man of God* (that is the Minister of the Gospel) might be thoroughly furnished to all 2 Tim. 3. 17. *good works.* That he might be instructed in every part of the Duty which belongs to his Office; whether it be to teach, or to reprove, or to correct, or to instruct in righteousness. Out of this sacred repository, and this only, we may be supplied with whatsoever is necessary for us and our People, to know, and to believe, and to do.

I therefore earnestly press you to the study of the Holy Scriptures day and night ; to get such parts of them by heart, as may be of most frequent and necessary use, that you may have them in readiness upon all occasions. And in your reading of them, to observe those places which are most obscure, to compare them with the Originals, and with the words coherent ; to consult some one or more of the best Commentators upon them, that you may attain to the true sense of them. And for those who have leisure and ability for it to read the Fathers, at least, of the three first Centuries ; the History and Antiquities of the Church ; the *Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman* and *Jewish* Antiquities ; and such other parts of Learning, without which many places of Scripture cannot be well understood. And that you may be thus diligent in Prayer, and in reading and studying the Holy Scriptures.

Fourthly, You promised *To lay aside the study of the World and the Flesh*. For the more you study the World, the less will you study the Holy Scriptures ; the more you consult the ease and pleasure of the Flesh, the less will you attend to the pleasing of God, and the saving of Souls. In what degree soever your affections are set upon the things on the Earth, in that they will necessarily be taken off from the things above. O remember, That every Clergy-man is a *man of God*, dedicated to him in a more eminent service than others are ; and that you rob God of all that time and study, which are needlessly spent upon other matters. Remember, that you are obliged, not only by your Baptismal Vow, to renounce the World and the Flesh, as Lay Christians also are ; but more closely bound to it than they, by this solemn Vow you made at your Ordination. Let it appear to all Men, that you pay your Vows by your living above this World, and having your Conversation in Heaven.

In the next place you promised these two things:

This part of the Ordination-Vow was made the Subject of the whole Charge at another place; and therefore is here the more briefly spoken to.

- I. *That You would be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves and your Families, according to the Doctrine of Christ. And which is somewhat more,*
- II. *To make both your selves and them, as much as in you lyeth, wholesome Examples and Patterns to the Flock of Christ.*

First, You promised to be diligent, *To frame your own selves according to the Doctrine of Christ*; to have your Conversation in all things suitable to the Gospel you preach. He can never be seriously concerned for other mens souls, who has not first a care of his own; nor make it his chief study to conduct others in *the narrow way that leads to Life*, who walks himself in *the broad way that leads to destruction*. But suppose he could sincerely endeavour to destroy that sin in others which he cherishes in himself; yet what success can he in reason expect? Can it be thought that his People should pay any regard to what he says, when they see that he does not regard it himself? Can they think, that he does in good earnest believe what he preaches, when he unpreaches the same again in his life? And is it then likely, that they should believe it, especially when it thwarts their beloved Lusts?

But if there should be any among us, whom this Consideration does not affect; yet methinks it should awaken them to consider, That a vicious Preacher, is in a much more miserable and deplorable Condition, than a vicious Hearer; because his sins are much more aggravated, and consequently, his Punishment will be proportionably more intollerable. Thou that teachest another Man should not be drunk, if thou art a Drunkard; Thou that preachest another should not be covetous, or proud, or contentious, if thou art so thy self, thy own Sermons will rise up in Judgment against thee; out of thy own Mouth shalt thou be

be condemned to that utter darkness thou hast warned others to make their escape from ; and shalt have the darkest and most dismal Portion in it. But this is not all : For,

2. That measure of Grace and Holiness which may suffice for a Lay man , will not be enough for those who are to be their Guides. You cannot go to Heaven at so cheap a rate , as your People can ; as your Calling is more holy , and stands in a nearer Relation to God , so also must your Lives be . You must be Patterns of all those Graces and Vertues you recommend to them ; that they by looking upon you , may be able to discern wherein they are defective. *In all things shewing thy self a Pattern of good Works*, says St. Paul to Titus ; which he also gives in charge to Timothy, *Be thou an Example to the Believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*. Which Commands, though given to those who were of the higher, yet are in proportion applicable to those of the lower Order of the Clergy : For as Bishops ought to be Examples to the inferiour Clergy, so the inferiour Clergy ought to be Examples to the Laity.

Tit. 2. 7.

Tim. 4. 12.

It is indeed the Duty of all , even the most vulgar Christians, if compared with the men of the World, to be Patterns to them ; so our Saviour tells his Disciples, That they were to be *the salt of the Earth*, and *the light of the world* ; and commands them to *let their light so shine before men, that others seeing their good works, might glorify their Father which is in Heaven*. What then is required of you, my Brethren, who ought to be Examples to them, who are to be Examples to the rest of Mankind ? *What manner of Persons ought you to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness ?*

Mat. 5. 13, 14, 15, 16.

Nor must we only endeavour to frame our selves, but our Families too, according to the Doctrine of Christ ; and to make them Examples to other Families ; to make our Children and Servants, as much as in us lyeth, Examples to those of others, in all those Graces and Duties, which

which are proper to those Relations: Which must be done by more fully instructing them in their respective Duties, and by frequently pressing their Duties upon them by such Considerations, as may be of power to over-awe their Consciences, and oblige them to the performance thereof; and by hearty Prayers to God, to make our endeavours this way successful.

There is one thing more in your Ordination-Vow, which I shall but very briefly recommend to your Consideration and Practice; and that is, *That you will maintain and set forward as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian-People; especially among them who are, or shall be committed to your Charge.*

As to make peace, not only between God and Man, but also between man and man, was one great thing our blessed Saviour had in his eye, when he came into the World; so, in order thereunto, he hath enjoined the Practice of all those Vertues, which tend to the begetting and promoting of Peace, and hath forbidden all those ill-natur'd qualities, that are Enemies to it. As he hath commanded, *If it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men:* So he hath pressed us with great variety of the most powerful Arguments, *to be at peace among our selves.* So much was Peace his Design, that he is stiled the P R I N C E of Peace, and his Gospel is called, the Gospel of Peace. As therefore we are the Ambassadors of this Prince of Peace, and intrusted with the dispensation of his Gospel of Peace, we are above all other men in the World, obliged, to the utmost of our power, to prevent or reconcile differences; and to maintain and promote Peace among our People.

To that end, go to them that you hear are at variance, endeavour to remove their Prejudices, to correct their Mistakes, to allay their Passions, to perswade them to mutual Condescension; and by all other fair means to make them heartily Friends: Ever remembering, That, *Blessed are*

are the Peace-makers for they shall be called the Children of God. Mat. 5. 9.

To the last part of your Ordination-Vow, (*viz. That you will reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, to whom is committed the Charge and Government over you, &c.*) I shall say nothing, but leave it to your own Consciences to comment upon it, presuming you will be impartial therein, and less favourable to your selves than I should be.

There is one thing still behind, that I must give you in Charge, and that is, The strict observance of the Canon against clandestine Marriages. I hope those who practice contrary to it, are in comparison but few, (notwithstanding the many Complaints which have been made to me about it) That they are no other than the idle, loose and vagrant; that is, the Scum and Refuse of the Clergy, who drive on this scandalous Trade: For I cannot persuade my self, That any Man who has not very much debauch'd his Conscience, and lost all sense of Honour and Reputation, can be easily prevailed with to make such Marriages, considering how express and severe the Laws of our Church are against them; and considering the many sins and mischiefs which are the usual Consequents of them.

Can. 62.

I shall pass over those which are of a more general extent, and only mention a few of those Ecclesiastical Constitutions, which more particularly relate to our own Church.

In a Council conven'd at *Westminster* in the Year 1175, it was Ordain'd, That if any Priest shall be found to have joyned any in Marriage clandestinely, he shall be suspended from his Office for the space of Three Years.

In a Council held after this, in the Church of *St. Pauls* in *London* in the Year 1328, it was decreed, That all Priests who shall presume to be present at any Matrimonial Contracts, before the solemn publication of Banns, shall

Lynw. l. 4.
Tit. 3. c. 1.

shall be suspended from their Office for three Years. And that every Priest, whether Secular or Regular, who shall without the special leave of the Diocesan, presume to Celebrate Marriage in any place but a Church or Chappel, which hath Parochial Rights, shall be suspended a whole Year *ab Officio*.

Lynw. l. 4.
Tit. 3. c. 2.

In another Council held at *St. Pauls London*, in the Year 1342, it was decreed, That all Priests who shall presume to be present at any clandestine Marriages, shall *ipso facto* incur the Sentence of Excommunication; and shall be publicly denounced four times every year. Which Decrees are still in force, by the Statute of the 25th. of *Hen. 8. C. 19.*

But we need not look so far back; one would think, it might be sufficient, to consider the 62^d. Canon, made in the Convocation in the year 1603. In which every Minister upon pain of Suspension for three years *ipso facto*, is prohibited to Celebrate Matrimony between any Persons without a License, except the Banns of Matrimony have been first publish'd three several Sundays or Holy-days, in the Parish Churches or Chappels, where the said Parties dwell. And is also upon the like Penalty prohibited, under any pretence whatsoever, to joyn any Persons so licensed, in Marriage, at any time but between the hours of 8 and 12 in the Morning; or in any place, but in the said Churches or Chappels where one of them dwelleth. It is not enough barely to have a Licence, if the Circumstances of *Time* and *Place* be not duly observed, you incur the Penalty of three years Suspension.

And as our Church hath set such a strict Fence about Marriages, so there was great Reason she should be so severe in punishing those that break thorough it; considering those enormous Sins, and those intolerable Mischiefs, which are the usual Attendants and Consequents of Clandestine Marriages.

One too common effect of such Marriages, is the Sin
of

of Incest, in joyning those Persons in Matrimony who are within the Degrees prohibited. In one of those Ecclesiastical Laws, I have now recited, this is mention'd as the Reason of it. A Proof of which (as I am inform'd) you have lately had, in Two Incestuous Clandestine Marriages made in this Diocess.

Another Sin usually attendant on these Marriages, is the violating the Rights of Parents, and contempt of their Authority. Nor do they only deprive Parents of the Duty of their Children, but in effect of their Children themselves; which is one of the worst sort of Thefts, and deserves a much more severe Punishment, than many other Thefts, which are by our Laws punished with Death.

The Dishonour they reflect upon our Church, and our Holy Profession, is intollerable; so much hath the Reputation of the Clergy been thereby lessen'd, that it hath been moved more than once, in the great Council of the Nation, that this Work might be taken out of their hands, and intrusted to others, who might be more faithful in the Execution of it.

How mischievous these Marriages commonly prove to the Parties so Married, and to their Children after them; how fatal they often are to considerable Families, even to the ruine of them; and consequently, What Mischiefs do hence redound to the Publick, I need not tell you. I forbear to proceed to other particulars, because these already mention'd, will, I hope, be sufficient, to deter every man from this scandalous Practice, who hath not sinn'd away all Conscience and Shame.

What remains, but that I charge the Church wardens under Pain of Perjury, to present all those Ministers, whom they either know, or have been credibly inform'd have been this way guilty. And if the Church-wardens shall neglect their Duty, I beseech you, my Brethren, to take care, that they may be some way or other presented;
that

that I may take care to see them punished according to Law. And if any Ministers shall after this Admonition given them, proceed to make such Marriages, as thinking their Danger will be past, as soon as the Visitation shall be over, I shall not fail, upon Information given me, to execute the Canon in its rigour against them.

To Conclude.

Let us now, my Brethren, seriously reflect upon what hath been spoken. Let us consider the Trust committed to us, the Vows that are upon us, the Account we must shortly give to the Almighty, All-seeing and Impartial Judge; the dreadful Woe we shall incur, if we be false to our Trust; the Glorious Reward we shall have, if we be faithful. For your Peoples sake, if you desire to save them: For your own sakes, if you desire to save your selves, and would not be condemned to a more intolerable Hell, than the worst of your People shall be condemned to: For God's sake, if you have any regard to his Commands; For Jesus's sake, if you have any Love for him, *Feed his Flock which he hath purchased with his own Blood; feed them, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready mind. Be instant in season, and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and patience: Make full proof of your Ministry; That so when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you may receive a Crown of Glory, which fadeth not away.*

F I N I S.



24/

